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Ballads of Heaven and Hell



By CLARENCE E. EDDY
"THE POET-PROSPECTOR"



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IF THERE ISN'T A HELL THERE OUGHT
TO BE.

THERE is a place, so preachers tell,
The proper name whereof is hell;

Though, in the presence of the ladies,
We simply speak of it as hades.

For all that's said it really seems
Hell is a place of all extremes—

"It's hot as hell," they sometimes say,
"It's cold as hell," some other day,

"It's wet as hell," some one will cry,
While others swear that hell is dry.

But which of these be true, or not,
It still obtains that hell is hot;

A place for sinners lot to shame,
To roast red-wrapped in writhing flame.

Yet there are many without grace,
Who say that there is no such place;

That hell, in fact, is but a myth
Got up to scare the sinners with;

Yes, there was bold Bob Ingersoll,
Who taught there was no hell at all,

But now, forsooth, that he is dead,
He has learned better, so 'tis said,

And thinks an ice-stand would do, well-
A rushing business down in hell.

But now, it really seems to me,
If there isn't a hell, there ought to be.

Or else a place there should be made
At least three hundred in the shade,

And all the agents of Belial
Should be sent there to sweat a while.

Our Congress could, without debate
The needed sum appropriate;

But such a place they fear to build
Lest it with congressmen be filled.

There are some men who might have cause
To want to send their mother-in-laws,

And there would be a mighty host
All richly meriting a roast.

There would be lawyers, not a few,
And politicians by the "slew"—

Yes, men, in fact, of all conditions
And not a few from high positions.

And, when they all were gathered in
The roasting should at once begin.

The world would shout, in ecstasy:
"From all these fiends, we now are free,

This is no 'iridescent dream,'
Ho, Satan, here, turn on the steam."

And in that happy time would come
The dawn of the millenium,

For all the pesky hosts of wrong
Would be in hell, where they belong.

Though wet or dry, or cold or hot,
A place of punishment or not,

Who reads my verses must agree
If there isn't a hell, there ought to be.



A SONG OF THE OLD PIONEER

THERE'S a hero I adore,
Full as much, or even more,
Than the heroes of whose fame we often hear,
He is bent and old and gray,
And he hasn't long to stay,
He is known as the old pioneer.

It was in the days of old,
In the early days of gold;
Now vanished, ah, many a year,
When they came in wagon trains,
O'er the wild and pathless plains,
That first came the old pioneer.

There are few that fully know,
How he fought the savage foe,
And how many loved ones lie beneath the plain,
Till the trumpet rends the skies,
And all the dead arise,
There can ne'er be truly numbered all the slain.

Yet not in vain the quest,
For they won for us the west,
To the broad Pacific's breaker beaten shore,
Where the red men used to roam,
There is many a happy home,
While the years are ever adding more and more.

But gone the olden ways
Of the early golden days,
And gone are the red men and the deer.
Aye, gone from hill and plain,
Never to return again,
As when first came the old pioneer.

Their ranks are growing thinner,
And their hair has turned to gray,
We miss them from their places every year.
And the few that God has left us
Haven't very long to stay.
Soon farewell to the old pioneer.

They are drifting, drifting, drifting,
Unto the silent land,
And toil and grief has turned their hair to gray,
Till they seem as if but waiting
To hear the great command,
"Come, weary ones, and put your cares away.

Come, ye heroes of the west,
Come, and enter into rest;
No longer 'mid your labors need you stay;
Your race on earth is run,
And your work is nobly done,
Come up higher to the brighter, better day."

Let us ne'er forget to love them,
And to praise them when we may,
And to hold their deeds in memory ever dear,
When the grave has closed above them
It will be too late to say

Hail the broken hero band
Of the early Western land,
For all their trials none may ever tell;
Bid them still a hearty cheer,
While yet they linger here,
For soon there comes the last farewell.

Aye, let it ne'er be said,
When these heroes are all dead,
That they unsung, unhonored, fought and fell;
Give now your love and cheers,
To the fading pioneers,
For soon there comes the last farewell.



THE DEVIL

"Infernal rubrics sung to Satan's might,
Or chanted to the dragon in his gyre."
—George Sterling.

The devil waits by myriad gates
For you and me and all,
He sets a snare for the unaware
That the unaware may fall:

He deals in sin, he sells us gin,
We lose to loaded dice,
But still applaud the darling fraud
And pay him double price:

In varied guise his arts he plies,
A fisherman is he
Who deftly sets his books and nets
Upon the human sea.

For long beside the surging tide
He seldom has to wait,
By day and night the suckers bite
So briskly at his bait:

To catch a preacher, such as Beecher,
Is his dear delight,
The sport is great nor long to wait
When the hook is baited right.

The world is old but gall and gold
Are wont its ways to win,
Honor must strive to keep alive
But seldom so with sin.

The devil fish is a seldom dish
For the one who way he wears
He is immune from hell's harpoon
For the devil's mark he bears.

Most any imp can catch the shrimp
Or the lobster in the shell
But the soul fish is the sole dish
That Satan loves so well:

More souls to win to ways of sin,
This is the devil's scheme,
From, love to lust, to lure to dust—
This is the devil's dream.

But now of late it seems that Sate
So oft a nature-faker,
Pursues his plan as best he can
Disguised as a muck-raker.

When Stanford White began to bite
Old Sate began to draw
And took him in with a bait of sin
And the Eva—Line of Thaw.

And Oscar Wilde was once beguiled
And landed from the swim
By such a bait it seems that Sate
Made a sucker out of him.

From modern days to ancient ways
We backward trace the theme,
There Helouise, fair Helouise,
Wanders as in a dream.

Who caresses Helen's tresses
By the Stygian shore,
Where the craven, sombre raven
Answers Nevermore.

You bet old Sate is up to date
In his quest of easy marks
With hooks and bribes for the finny tribes
But he seldom catches sharks.

For those akin to the source of sin—
The devil's very own,—
Are not the hatch he seeks to catch
But seeks to let alone.

But though old Sate seems very great
'Tis only for a spell,
The game will get him yet, you bet,
SO LET HIM GO TO HELL.



TO HELL WITH THE POETS

"We know of but few great, living poets—in fact the sentiment of this practical old world seems to be, 'to hell with poets anyway'."—Daily Paper.

Few are the poets in these days,
Or so at least the critics say,
It seems a mighty discord plays,
"To hell with poets, anyway."

From time to time in other years,
As this old world has whirled along
It heard the music of the spheres
Re-echoed in a poet's song.

But now from out the grind and groan
Wherein all song is drowned today,
They say that poets are unkown
For few to fame have found a way,

Perhaps 'tis true there are but few
Great living poets but we know
That some have died by suicide
Because starvation was too slow.

But few, I fear, will see or hear,
Or seeing they will pass and say,
"We have no time to read his rhyme,
To hell with poets, anyway."

There may be some with thoughts unkind,
Who, if they read, will say of me,
Because it seems to fit their mind,
"To hell with poets such as he."

The world, indeed, will hardly heed
What any poet sings today,
No son of song could live for long
On what his singing brings today.

The world is cold, it wants but gold,
It cares not for the poet's lay,
It grinds along without a song,
It does not think that poets pay.

Are they to blame for lack of fame,
Or is it that the world is wrong,
This age of greed doth seem to need
Some voice like Gabriel's trumpet song.

If Israfel should come from heaven,
Although he sings so wildly well,
Perhaps this hard old world would even
Tell Israfel to go to hell.

I see the mighty statue stand,
Its head is gold, its feet are clay,
It holds this legend in its hand,
"TO HELL WITH POETS, ANYWAY."

For now the mighty grind and groan
Of commerce and the crowding throng
Upon the world's four winds is blown
And few can hear the poet's song.

Some say that poets come from Heaven
And when I see a falling star.
I wonder why that God has given
To let the poet fall so far?

If they are strangers here below
If from the stars the poets stray
This may be why that they are so
Unwont to win the world-worn way.

It may be true they come from Him
To teach us hope and calm our fears
For One whose eyes with tears were dim
Shall serve to wipe away all tears.

Oh poor old World, you have your woes,
Perhaps we should not blame you so,
You have such cares that, goodness knows,
We should not seek to shame you so:

The poet is your friend, Oh World,
Your friend, whatever you may say,
And will befriend unto the end,
Oh World, forever and a day.

FOLDED HANDS

In memory of one whose life knew but few roses but
whose grave was strewn with wreaths.

BY shores where the rocks are the steepest
The sea mourns most to the lands,
But the pathos divinest and deepest
Is the pathos of folded hands:

The hands that are folded forever
Over the silent breast,
Poor, weary hands that will never
Waken again to the quest.

I seek not to war with another,
It would break my heart I know
To look on some poor, dead brother
And feel I had wronged him so.

To every heart there is given,
In all of the world's broad lands
A touch of the pity of Heaven
When gazing on folded hands.

It is God's own just decreeing
This to the dead we bestow ;
He may seek to chasten us, seeing
That in life we neglected them so.

The roses are worth the giving
But a single rose, it is said,
Is worth far more to the living
Than countless wreathes to the dead.

There are many lives so lonely,
Lonely through all the lands,
Give not the roses only
To the poor, folded hands.



THE SINGER OF THE SUNS

To George Sterling, the great, new California poet,
author of "The Testimony of the Suns," etc.

Oh mighty singer, hail to thee,
But canst thou see beyond the bars
Or speak that nameless mystery
That reigns beyond our utmost stars?

Oh canst thou find an end of space
Or say what awful dream is this?
And would we see God face to face
If mind should cross the vast abyss?

We know his suns and systems flame,
Beyond all methods to compute
Till mystery without a name
Looms on our minds and we are mute.

There lie the secrets none shall see
While yet they breathe this mortal breath,
To know that nameless mystery
Were dread insanity or death.

There may it be our wearied souls
Will find at last a resting place,
Where God's infinity enfolds
Infinity of time and space.

No clarion note so clear and strong
As is this mighty voice of thine
And ne'er before has mortal song
Ascended nearer the divine.

In weariness it folds its wings
Beyond unnumbered suns it sings
But sobs at last by gulfs of night,
This side the illimitable light.

Lo, all our knowledge as a mote
Amidst immensity doth seem
And worlds as specks of dust afloat
Upon creation's morning beam.

Oh beckon on, sweet rays of dawn,
Oh muse arise and sing again,
We crave from thee the mystery,
The music of the grand Amen.

THE QUEEN OF THE PURPLE MIST

A ballad of Death Valley and the mighty deserts.

UNDER the skies where the mountains rise,
 Rugged and vast and bold,
Under the skies of the west there lies
 The land of the lure of gold,
Of gold that is found in the gracious ground
 That misers never have doled:

Upon the crest of the Mighty West
 And fanned by the cooling breeze
That breathes and blows from the mountain snows
 And the mighty western seas
A goddess stands with beckoning hands
 And calls her argosies:

Queen of the land of the sage and sand
 Where the golden treasures lie,
The stars that gem her diadem
 Are the stars of the desert sky,
In purple mist she keeps her tryst
 While sun and moon go by:

In purple mist she keeps her tryst
 Enrobed in purple sheen,
She calls, "Come here, come woo me near,
 I am the Golden Queen."
And some she loves but some reproves
 And gives but dule and teen.

And they are bold who woo for gold
 For some win but a grave,
But they win best who love the quest
 Nor court her as a slave,
And well they woo who dare and do
 For Fortune loves the brave:

And they are brave who tempt the grave
Where heat and thirst may kill,
But men were known to win a throne
And conquer Fate by will,
So where the dry, great deserts lie
The spirit lures them still:

In purple mist by sunlight kissed
The upland deserts lie,
A purple sheen enwraps the scene
Beneath the desert sky,
But some behold a mist of gold
That lures them till they die:

In dying dreams they see fair streams,
In dreams their thirst they slake,
With dry canteens, in dry ravines
They sleep, no more to wake
Till on their sleep, so strange and deep
Great Heaven's dawn shall break.

Where vast and high the deserts lie
The cooling breezes blow,
But there is death in the furnace breath
Of the pits that lie below
And such a hot, accursed spot
I too have chanced to know:

The Valley where the burning air
Is filled with burning thirst,
The Valley famed and justly named
As with a name accursed,
The silent, sub-sea mystery
Of horrors oft rehearsed:

In the abode of the horned toad,
In the purple mist's domain,
In the silent land of the sage and sand,
In the land of stingy rain,
Where the owl and the bat and the trading rat
Their dwelling place maintain:

Where mountains hold the morning gold
And gold is in the ground,
And golden themes and golden schemes
And golden dreams abound,
Where men of old found sun-burnt gold
And gold may still be found:

The mourning dove there mourns of love
And the doleful coyotes cry,
By lonely springs the cricket sings
To the winds that wander by
And round and round with muffled sound
The vultures cleave the sky:

Why mourn of love, Oh mourning dove,
Does love call thee to mourn
For those who wait on luck or fate
In mystic lands forlorn?
Thy plaint may be a threnody
For those who ne'er return:

Some win by luck, some win by pluck
And some win not at all,
Some lie forlorn by sage and thorn
With the purple mist for pall,
While life endures the spirit lures
And gold allures us all:

She waves her hand across the land
And the cities rise like dreams,
The golden queen of the purple sheen
In the land of golden schemes,
All the loving words of sympathy and cheer.
By mountains rolled in mists of gold
Where heaven's glory gleams.



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